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Interview..

'MR. FBI' TELLS ABOUT

.. Communist Threat in U.S.

FBI
Director
Hoover



COMMUNIST THREAT IN U.S.

AN INTERVIEW WITH J. EDGAR HOOVER

Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

EDITOR'S NOTE: *How much of a threat are Communists to the security of the United States? How can the average citizen recognize Communists? Does a drive against subversive activity bring "thought control" in its wake?*

To answer these and other questions, U.S. News & World Report invited to its conference rooms J. Edgar Hoover, the man who fought espionage and sabotage in World War II and, since then, has taken on the problems of Communist infiltration and the possibility of sabotage. The interview follows.

J. EDGAR HOOVER, to many people, is the personification of law enforcement. For nearly 27 years he has headed the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He has caught criminals himself, established the FBI Academy for training police officers and made the "G man" a national hero.

Mr. Hoover started out in life to be a minister. But by the time he finished high school he had determined to become a lawyer. He entered the Department of Justice as a file reviewer, was appointed to the FBI in 1921, became its chief in 1924.

Q *Is there a public misconception, Mr. Hoover, of the functions of the FBI?*

A Yes. In the public mind any investigation is often associated with the FBI. This is particularly true in connection with matters pertaining to internal security. The public is aware of the FBI's responsibility for the investigation of espionage, sabotage and subversive activities. Other phases relating to internal security have been assigned to other agencies of Government—illegal entry of aliens to the Immigration and Naturalization Service; the physical security and guarding of atomic installations to the Atomic Energy Commission, and plant protection to the Munitions Board.

The Munitions Board has the responsibility for establishing standards, policies and procedures of security for industries producing defense materials. The FBI has no responsibility whatsoever for physical security within a plant.

Q *What is the biggest single menace, so to speak, that we have to be on guard against?*

A Our most urgent objective is to prevent any disruption of our mobilization program, and we must take every preventive step possible to safeguard our productive might should we be faced with a grave national emergency. The most important single menace to our internal security is the Communist Party, U. S. A., its members, fellow travelers and sympathizers.

Q *You mean if there should be war there would probably be activity on the part of our enemies here?*

A There is no question as to that and an analogy can be drawn from the events of Dec. 7, 1941. Prior to

that time there was widespread speculation that an outbreak of sabotage was soon to occur. It didn't occur. And one of the primary reasons it didn't was because of years of concentrated effort by the FBI. Potential saboteurs had been identified. When war did come it was possible to effect their apprehension promptly and take those regarded as dangerous before hearing boards to judge their cases. The FBI, of course, does not pass upon guilt or innocence.

Q *Are the Communists active now?*

A They are exceedingly active.

Q *By "active" do you mean that they are putting themselves in a position to commit acts of sabotage?*

A While there has been a decline in Communist Party strength, this simply means that the Party has purged itself of those concerning whom it had doubts. Others have dropped out of the party because of the pressure of public opinion, or because of a fear of legislation which has been enacted on local, county, State and federal levels. Then there is another group which has been taken out of the active membership of the party and has gone underground for possible action at a later date.

Q *The numbers that you have in this chart (see page 35)—does that represent the net remainder?*

A That represents the total number of avowed members of the party. The party hasn't issued cards for three years.

Q *Do you feel that these members of the party are potential enemies, or might be involved in actual espionage?*

A Every avowed Communist, every "hard core" Communist, every indoctrinated Communist inher-

Allegiance to Moscow, Not to America . . . Labor's Battle Against Communists . . . Why U. S. Can't Have a 'Gestapo'

ently owes an allegiance to a way of life different from that of the average American citizen.

Q Does that mean that he doesn't necessarily owe allegiance to the Moscow Government?

A No. He owes allegiance to the science of Marxism-Leninism and his motherland is the Soviet Union.

Q Yet he might be in favor of revolution in this country in order to introduce Marxism, and still not wish to have it controlled by Russia—could you draw that distinction?

A I don't think you can draw such a distinction.

Q Do you think that Communism is Moscow-led?

A The record speaks for itself. The Communist Party in the United States from its inception has never deviated from the Moscow line.

Q You think, in other words, they owe allegiance to Moscow rather than to the United States?

A There is no question about it.

Q And you think that these people, if they really were to tell the truth, would have to admit that they prefer to have Moscow rather than Washington run the United States?

A Very definitely.

Q How do you arrive at that conclusion—what evidence do you have of that?

A The evidence is clear and unequivocal on that point. It was established in the trial of the eleven Communist leaders in New York. It has been developed through the testimony of old-time Communists who have broken with the Communist Party, and the best evidence, of course, is the record which, as I indicated a moment ago, shows that the Communist Party in the United States has never deviated from the Moscow line from the time of its inception until the present time.

Q You mean every little whim of Stalin has been followed by a veering of the line over here?

A Yes.

Agents Follow Communists Underground

Q When you say that the Communist Party "has gone underground," or has become more and more an "underground" organization, what do you mean?

A By that I mean that all that remains of the Communist Party at the present time above ground is a self-constituted core, which for appearance's sake maintains a public contact. As a manifestation of what is meant by the Party "going underground" we might point to the fact that members of the Communist Party have increasingly taken up activities in other groups, in other organizations and fronts. The party itself has not issued membership cards for some three

years, and there has been a rather drastic decentralization in the operation of the party. They are holding fewer and fewer public meetings.

The members have been conditioned, during the past few years, to act on their own by applying the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism to the problem at hand. Membership records no longer exist, Communist Party clubs, which at one time would number a hundred people, have been broken down into groups which have only three to five members today. The very actions of the individuals give a pretty clear picture of the fact that they don't want to be out in the open. They're sending couriers from district to district, and by word of mouth are passing out party orders.

Q Do you have a means of checking up on them just the same, even though they have "gone underground"?

A Oh, yes.

Q You have undercover agents in various parts of the United States?

A Yes. This technique is necessary in keeping abreast with clandestine operations of any subversive organization.

Party Punishes 'Guilt by Suspicion'

Q Do they trust party loyalty any more?

A They have a very strict loyalty program of their own which has resolved all doubts against the individual, and if there has been the slightest suspicion he has been expelled from the party.

Q They are thrown out by means of "guilt by association," are they not?

A I think they go a step further—"guilt by suspicion."

Q In other words, no matter what your reputation is, they won't accept it if they want to accuse you?

A That's right.

Q What are their means of punishment?

A Their chief means, of course, is to expel an individual from the party.

Q Isn't it quite a severe penalty to a conscientious Communist to be expelled?

A Yes, and not only that but expulsion carries with it not only ostracization from old friends in the party, but brings down upon the individual vituperation and the recommended party treatment for so-called stool pigeons.

Q Do you feel that their loyalty test is fair to the little fellow who is really a conscientious Communist?

A From the standpoint of fairness I would say that Communists have falsely accused some of their mem-

(Continued on page 34)

... 'Fear of sabotage in vital areas'

bers who were innocent of charges of furnishing information to the FBI.

Q *A number like 43,217 Communists in America—so few, comparatively—can they be dangerous?*

A It must be remembered that there are actually six levels to the Communist Party. In the first instance, you have the professional Communist who was referred to in other years as the card-carrying member of the party. Secondly, there is the concealed Communist. Then there are the sympathizer, the fellow-traveler, the innocent who has been duped by the Communists, and, finally, there is the opportunist. The Communists themselves have made the boast that for every party member there are 10 others ready, willing and able to do the party's work.

Q *What do you think the strategically placed Communist could do in the event an emergency occurred—what types of dangers do they present?*

A There is always the fear of sabotage in vital areas. There is the ever-present danger of stirring up domestic strife, creating disturbances, bringing about slowdowns in industry. We saw the Communist at work during the period of the Berlin-Moscow pact, when for practical purposes certain aircraft plants were shut down as a result of the actions of a small group of Communists. Then, too, the party serves as a base for recruits for the Soviet espionage service.

Q *Is that a real service?*

A Very definitely.

Q *The FBI has told the public to watch out for specific matters, such as foreign submarine landings. Have you had any reason to believe that will happen?*

A It has been only a few short years since the Nazis landed eight men by submarine on our shores.

Q *Couldn't Communists just come walking over our Southern border?*

A As we become more security conscious and tighten up our security they will find it far more difficult.

Of Parachutists and Poison

Q *What is there to the suspicion about parachute landings—what makes you think they may happen?*

A We received any number of reports during World War II of alleged parachute landings. In a few instances there was some delay in reporting that information to the authorities with the consequent result that rumors became rife and near panic resulted in certain areas.

Q *In other words, the planting of rumors for the purpose of causing panic?*

A That's correct. But if there are reports or suspicions to that effect, then the information should be given to the FBI very promptly.

Q *What is the theory about the poisoning of the public water supplies—aren't you guarding those pretty carefully?*

A The FBI does not have the responsibility of guarding the water supply. That responsibility belongs to the local authorities and other agencies.

Q *You speak of various activities of a suspicious nature the public may hear about, such as individuals loitering in a restricted area. That would be a matter to report to local police rather than the FBI, wouldn't it?*

A It would depend, of course, on the area. If it were a military reservation, either the military or the FBI should be notified at once.

If it were a public utility, the local police should receive the report. In any event, if there were any basis for suspicion of espionage, sabotage or subversive activities, the information should also be reported to the FBI because subversive activities are nationwide in their scope of operation. An individual loitering in an isolated restricted area may very well come from some point far removed, and the local authorities would have no reason to have knowledge of his background. On the other hand, the FBI might very well have information on him. It is conceivable that he might be one of the individuals who had dropped out of the Communist Party for underground service for the party.

Cleanup by the Unions

Q *What is the activity of Communists inside labor unions, according to the information you have?*

A We, of course, do not investigate labor unions, nor do we concern ourselves with employer-employee relationships. We have, however, investigated innumerable instances of Communist infiltration into labor unions. The Communists today do not have the power that they once had, nor do they have the influence they once had in labor unions. The great majority of labor leaders and organizations are alert to Communist infiltration.

Q *They have done a good job in cleaning them out?*

A They've done an excellent job.

Q *And the labor unions and their leaders have cooperated to the fullest extent with the FBI?*

A That's right, in the great majority of instances.

Q *Is it possible, however, that even they may not be able to detect all the Communists?*

A It is entirely possible that a concealed Communist may hide in the most unsuspected and unlikely place.

Q *Couldn't he cause trouble even if he weren't an officer but merely a malcontent?*

A Definitely.

Q *By stirring up the men on some issue?*

A Yes.

Q *Is there evidence that that kind of thing goes on in some labor unions?*

A There has been evidence that it has occurred.

Q *In other words, when they cleaned out these Communists from the labor unions, did we get from*

... The very essence of Communism is deceit'

it an idea of how the Communists worked and what they did in the labor unions?

A Ordinarily they would try to get their members into positions of influence in the union, have them become officers wherever possible. They would have a Communist bloc at the meetings, which would usually be the first to arrive and the last to leave. They studied the issues, were very glib on their feet and were trained to speak on issues. They gave an excellent account of their ability to heckle and harass other speakers and officers. In filibustering they had few equals.

Q It may be that many of our labor leaders were ignorant of these techniques?

A I am sure that patriotic and loyal labor leaders are now aware of their tactics.

Q So that popular education on the subject of the techniques of the Communists is essential?

A Yes. Education is one of the most important factors in combating Communism. Communism cannot compete with our own American way of life, and that is one of the reasons why the Communists employ deceit. The very essence of Communism is deceit, and only by constant education in the truth can you really combat Communism, on a long-range, permanent basis.

Q Are there any distinguishing characteristics—or is there any way you can spot a Communist?

A By their actions.

Q They don't look different?

A No.

Q Do you feel that there is less of a tendency to scoff at the charge that we have a lot more Communists in America today than there were, say, five years ago?

A I think the public has been educated to a great extent. Legislative investigating committees and the press have helped in the process of educating the public.

Q Would you say it was a favorite Communist technique to belittle the amount of Communist activity here?

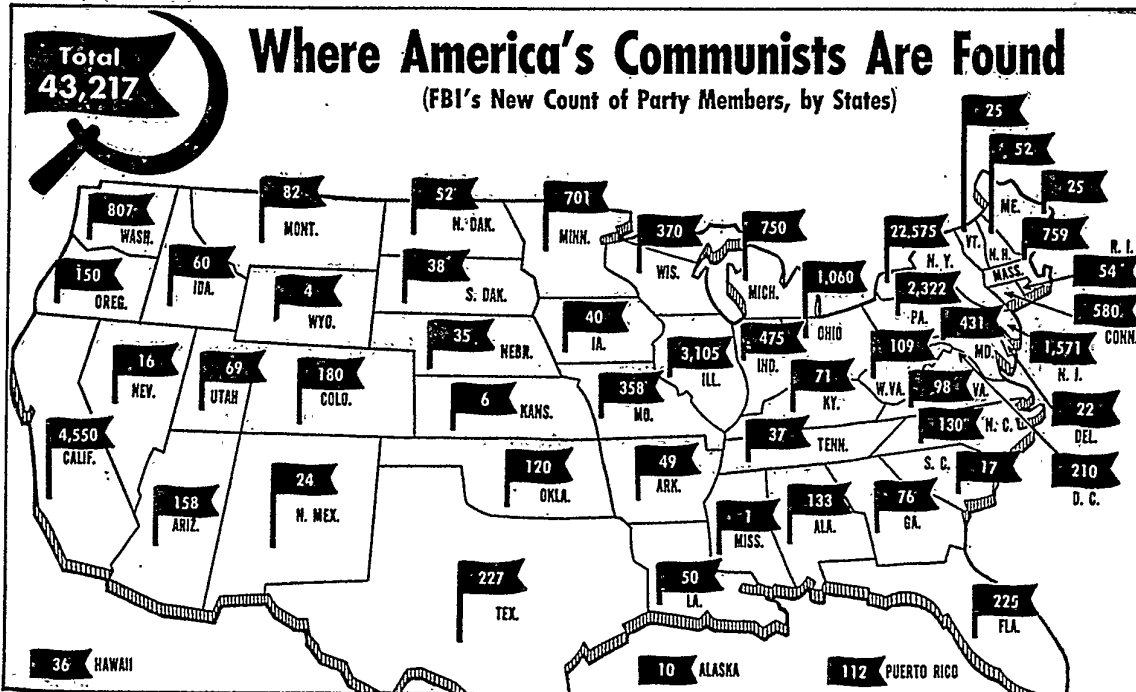
A Very definitely.

Q Have you seen evidence of that?

A As an illustration, a few years ago there was a Communist Action group which was hard pressed in a given area, primarily through the energetic efforts of a few individuals. So to counteract these few anti-Communists, the Communists developed a technique: Whenever anybody would denounce Communists, they would say, "What's wrong with being a Communist?" And the average person had given little thought to the subject. They knew they didn't like Communism, but were at a disadvantage with a trained Communist agitator.

Q You spoke a moment ago about their being

(Continued on page 36)



... 'No evidence to substantiate charge of "thought control"'

"trained in deceit." Do you think that they hesitate to lie under oath?

A I don't think there is any question but that they would lie under oath, if it would further the Communist aim.

Q *In other words, they would issue denials promptly when they are charged with being Communists?*

A Yes. A fundamental premise of Marxism-Leninism is that whatever advances the Communist cause is moral.

Why Communists Go to Court

Q *Is part of their technique to take accusations to court, or before some tribunal—would they intimidate that way?*

A There have been instances where they have been quick to file libel suits.

Q *That would be for the purpose of throwing their accusers off the track?*

A Partially, and to discourage others from making similar charges.

Q *In the various cases you have investigated, have you had many instances in which Communists had previously lied under oath before the full facts and the truth was developed?*

A Yes. There have been several instances of that type.

Q *Have you any reason to believe that those who lie under oath do so as a result of their loyalty to the party, which commands them to do it, or would you say they are just congenital liars?*

A I would say it's a dedication to the principle of Marxism-Leninism.

Q *In other words, the end justifies the means?*

A That's right.

Q *Are you always able to prove that they are lying?*

A Not always. To prove that they are engaging in falsehood it is necessary to have legal evidence. Sometimes this proof is most difficult to obtain.

Q *Do you have many Communists who are under suspicion, whom you are actually watching through your operatives from day to day? Are you watching a lot of people?*

A We have a relatively small force when you take into consideration that there is approximately one special agent to every 29,000 inhabitants in this country. With some 43,217 members of the Communist Party, and only 5,200 agents—it's a physical impossibility to keep all of them under surveillance.

Local Authorities Help

Q *What co-operation do you get from local authorities?*

A We have excellent co-operation from the local authorities. Our policy is to devote our energies and man power on a selective basis, and watch carefully those who we feel are potentially the most dan-

gerous, and who are engaged in definite subversive activity.

Q *Don't we often hear the statement made that we are developing a "police state?" What is your answer to that?*

A So far as the FBI is concerned, the best answer is to look at the record. As a matter of policy the FBI does not undertake any activity unless it is pursuant to congressional directive or executive directive. The FBI must constantly justify its procedures and policies to the Department of Justice, to the Attorney General and his assistants, to the Budget Bureau, and, on an annual basis, it must go before the appropriation committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Q *Could there be abuses by individual agents without your detecting them?*

A The FBI is a human agency and it can make mistakes, but when these occur you can be certain that we will hear about them and in such instances we always make a full inquiry into the facts. Our work is constantly under the scrutiny of the courts and other authorities, and we could not long survive if there were abuses.

Q *In other words, the safeguard of this country is the fact that when you have had somebody confined he is entitled to a fair trial and special counsel?*

A And the FBI does not arrest anybody on its own initiative. Arrests are made only after the facts have been presented to the appropriate prosecuting authorities, who evaluate the evidence and arrive at a decision as to whether or not prosecutive action should take place.

'Thought Control' Denied

Q *What would you say to the charge often made that we are engaging in the practice of "thought control" with our constant watching of the activities of Communists?*

A The FBI is concerned not with what Communists think but with what they do—their actions, just as in every other field of its investigative activity. There is no scintilla of evidence to substantiate the charge that the FBI is engaged in "thought control" activities.

Q *What about disapproving speakers?*

A The FBI does not approve or disapprove of speakers. That is not our concern.

Q *It doesn't have a record on them for which someone can write in to you?*

A No, sir. The files of the FBI are confidential, and the contents cannot be used for that purpose.

Q *Does the FBI gather data on important persons or Government officials?*

A There is no basis in fact for that.

We do not investigate anyone unless there is an allegation which, if true, comes within a congressional or executive directive assigned to the FBI.

Q *What would you say to the statement which is*

... 'Communist Party is subservient to Soviet foreign policy'

often made that, after all, the Communist Party isn't really different from the Republican Party or the Democratic Party? Isn't it argued that it is a political party, and as such shouldn't have any more interference than any other political party would have?

A The record provides the answer to your question. If the Communist Party had the same aims and objectives as the Republican or Democratic Party they would not be "going underground" nor would they seek to conceal their activities as they do. The concept that they are a political party is primarily derived from the Communists' own propaganda which is designed to defend their activities.

Q Have you ever seen any record of the Communist Party filing publicly the sources of its funds, as the Republican and Democratic parties do?

A No. There is no question about that.

Q Don't the people who furnish money to the Communists try to hide that?

A Definitely.

Q Is that possibly due to public opprobrium, or is it because they get themselves into trouble—what is the reason for hiding their finances?

A I think there are two basic reasons: one, they want no evidence of their link with the Communist Party and, two, they are fearful of the repercussions of public opinion.

Power From President and Congress

Q What is the FBI's authority to keep track of the Communists?

A The President of the United States has, by directive, placed the responsibility upon the FBI of receiving all information on subversive activities, and, likewise, to co-ordinate all investigation of espionage, sabotage and other related matters. Then, too, the Smith Act passed by Congress in 1940 makes it a crime to advocate the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force and violence. The eleven Communist leaders were convicted of violating this Act. Also the Internal Security Act of 1950 places certain responsibilities upon us. That statute also provides that individuals fitting into a certain category in time of war would be subject to detention.

Q Would you say, then, that if the Communist Party operated as the Republican or Democratic Party and confined itself to a mere discussion of some different economic system than we have, you wouldn't be spending your time worrying about it?

A But the Communist Party would never do that because the Communist Party is a way of life, and their ultimate objective is to destroy our way of life by violence rather than by constitutional means.

Q If that's the case, would you say that it is the link between the Communist Party and this plot to overthrow our Government that differentiates them from the usual political party?

A That is one factor. In addition, the Communist

Party, as evidenced by the record, is subservient to Soviet foreign policy. It has no regard for our traditions, no respect for our institutions. It would replace all religion with a Marxist-Leninist philosophy that does not recognize the existence of God; it seeks to infiltrate and corrupt our educational system. In short, there is no basis for comparing the American Communist Party with an American political party. As Justice [Learned] Hand said, in effect, in upholding the conviction of the eleven Communist leaders, you don't have to wait until the country is overthrown before you take action against the person you know is trying to overthrow it.

FBI Against 'Hysteria'

Q Isn't it possible that by asking for the co-operation of the citizens of the country in reporting subversive activities, some of these citizens may just be encouraged to circulate malicious gossip or idle rumor, and engage in "witch hunts"? Isn't that a danger?

A I think that citizens co-operating with the FBI provide the greatest barrier you could possibly have against "witch hunts" and hysteria; because, if the citizen has a suspicion, it is his duty to turn it over to the FBI and from that time on do nothing unless he receives a request.

Q We really have quite a number of investigative agencies in various Government departments, haven't we?

A That's correct.

Q It can't be said that we have one single agency which has complete investigative control?

A That's correct. Each of the investigative agencies is a specialist in its own field.

Q Do you hold that is a good thing or that they ought to be concentrated in one place?

A I think it is a healthy situation as each federal agency has its special field of operations. An investigative agency functions best when it is highly mobile and tightly administered.

Protection in Jury Trial

Q All investigative agencies—when they make an arrest—have to come to a court and prove their case before a judge or jury and the defendant has the right of counsel no matter how poor he is, hasn't he?

A That is the American way.

Q So the greatest check against a "Gestapo" in America is our free system of court procedure?

A A "Gestapo" under the American system would be an impossibility. In addition to the protection of our courts and Congress we have a free press, which would quickly spot injustices or any excesses on the part of any Government agency.

Q Does the Communist system offer any such benefits or protection?

A None whatever.

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